

does the fundamental structure of our national constitution and involving a serious change in our national life, is not to be interpreted as an alliance with the German Kaiser and a manifestation of hostility to the great cause for which Great Britain and her Allies are fighting. If such a difference of opinion is not respected in this House or elsewhere in Canada, this country would not be worthy of the great sacrifices which have been made to sustain her honour in the great struggle on behalf of freedom and liberty.

As to the supreme object to be obtained, there is no division or controversy. Surely nobody thinks that any member of this House would like to see Germany victorious.

A difference of opinion arises, because we do not agree as to the best methods to pursue, taking into consideration the needs of the Allies, the particular conditions prevailing in this country, the imperative duty to maintain national unity, and the proper safeguarding of the provisions which govern our Federal constitution. It would be useless for me to discuss this proposal of the Government unless it is understood that those who hold the opinions I do are as sincere and honest as the supporters of the Bill, seeking as loyally as they do to solve the very difficult problems which confront us at this period of our history.

I am opposed to this Bill because I believe the voluntary system is the best and the only system suited for this country in the present war, and that coercion will be detrimental to the one aim we all desire to attain, namely, the winning of the war. My second objection is that this proposal is a flagrant and direct violation of all the pledges given by the leaders and public men of this country to the Canadian people since the beginning of the war, upon the strength of which pledges so many sacrifices have been made. I also oppose this Bill because it involves a radical and most serious change in our constitutional relations and constitutes a departure from well-known principles agreed to by all parties as to the constitution of this Confederation. I claim that this Parliament has no mandate to enact such a change without consulting the Canadian people.

In the first place, I do not agree with those who say that the voluntary system has been a failure either in this country or in Great Britain. We can fairly argue that we have raised under our voluntary system a larger army than was ever contemplated by any student of military affairs

[Mr. E. Lapointe.]

in this country. We have made and we are now making a very large contribution to the war which the Mother Country and her Allies are waging, and it is a calumny upon ourselves and upon the Mother Country to suggest that they do not fully realize and recognize the magnitude of our efforts and of our contribution. It was my privilege a few months ago to spend some weeks in England and France, and I heard in all quarters words of the greatest praise as to Canada's contribution to the war. No one there ever anticipated that this young country, with its population sparsely disseminated over a wide territory, could raise, equip and put into the field an army approximating 400,000 men, and that at a cost considerably larger than what is paid by any of the belligerent countries for the same number of men. Why should Canadians minimize and under-estimate the magnificent and heroic sacrifices our country has made?

It is not true that the voluntary system has been a failure in England. 5,000,000 men have been raised as volunteers in the British Isles, only one additional million has been brought under arms by conscription. Great publicity has recently been given to certain words of the Prime Minister of Great Britain who said that the United States should avoid the blunders made by Great Britain at the beginning of the war. It has been intimated that Mr. Lloyd George was there referring to the merits or demerits of the compulsory system. The British blunder was not in the method adopted to raise the men necessary to fight the battles, but in failing for a certain time to take proper means to provide those men with an adequate quantity of munitions and supplies upon the battlefield. The men were never wanting; what was needed was sufficient artillery and machine guns. Voluntary enlistment in England, however, was at all times hindered by the antagonism and hostility of the powerful class of conscriptionists who had been clamouring for years for compulsory military service. One of the largest and most influential newspapers in England was refusing peremptorily to publish advertisements for voluntary enlistment and was assailing the system every day. The conscriptionists were a strong and influential faction, and their policy was finally adopted to disarm dangerous opposition, and as a diplomatic measure rather than military necessity.

But historical, economic and political conditions are quite different in this country,